California Performance Review Commission
University of California Testimony
for Volunteerism Panel

Provost M.R.C. Greenwood

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Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

**Testimony Regarding CPR Recommendation ETV33, that all public college and
university students be required to do 16 hours of community service**

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the CPR Commission's recommendation that
all students enrolled in California's public colleges and universities be required to perform
a minimum of 16 hours of community service in order to receive their degree or certificate.

Public service is a critical component of the University of California's three-part mission,
and we are proud that our faculty, students, and staff make important contributions to the
state through various forms of public service, including volunteering in community service
programs. While many of UC's students **voluntarily** perform community service at or
above the 16 hours that would be required by the CPR recommendation, we are very
concerned that making such service a graduation requirement would be extremely
expensive, given the resources that would need to be spent both within UC and at the
community organizations and agencies for setting up, approving, tracking and supervising
student participation.

We agree with the CPR Commission that volunteerism is important, benefiting not only the
communities served, but also enriching the lives of volunteers themselves.   However, we
do not favor the proposal to make community service a mandatory graduation
requirement.

Several years ago, the University's Academic Senate examined a similar proposal from
the Davis administration, and found a number of reasons it would be problematic to
implement. The Senate concluded that making community service mandatory undermines
student interest in participation. Existing research on collegiate community service
suggests that a graduation requirement impedes, rather than promotes, the fostering of an
ethic of service, particularly inasmuch as quantity (e.g., minimum hours requirements) is
emphasized over quality.

In addition, there is concern that even a small public service requirement for graduation
may be too burdensome for some students who have to work, who have family
responsibilities, or who have other life circumstances that would make it a hardship.

Another concern is the significant faculty resources that would need to be spent on design,
oversight and approval of community service opportunities that contain sufficient academic
learning components. Graduation requirements are set by the faculty, and must be based
upon sound academic grounds. Most faculty reviewers agreed that when community
service is a degree requirement, there must be a significant learning component (as there
is with the University's existing service learning courses, which grant academic credit to
participating students). We believe it is important to ensure quality, not just quantity, when
designing graduation requirements.

Let me elaborate on the issue of resources. Costs to place and track all 200,000 of our
undergraduates in quality programs would be significant. We believe that in its

cost/benefit analysis, the CPR report did not adequately consider the additional resources the University would have to invest to implement a mandatory community service graduation requirement. In order to ensure that students meet the new requirement prior to graduation, UC would need to establish an infrastructure at each campus for:

1) tracking student participation;
2) identifying organizations willing to participate in the universities' community service program, and having faculty confirm that the volunteer placements are appropriate to count toward graduation requirements; and
3) informing students of volunteer opportunities.

In addition, although students certainly make significant contributions to the agencies at which they volunteer, the reality is that the agencies also incur costs in setting up service opportunities, and in training and supervising students. That is not to say that volunteerism is too costly, but it must be recognized that the proposal would involve costs as well as benefits.

We believe alternate methods of increasing community service should be considered, such as expanding efforts to promote service opportunities, and expanding efforts to integrate service activities with traditional academic course work.   Efforts are underway at UC campuses to further promote and facilitate voluntary student community service, as agreed to under the terms of our latest compact with the Governor.

- Campuses across the UC system are developing improved volunteer outreach materials and resources, like searchable websites that help students connect with hundreds of meaningful service opportunities in community organizations. Campuses also have dedicated staff within service learning and volunteer centers and within academic departments that help facilitate student service. E.g., UCSC has field study coordinators in 6 majors (including Community Studies, Environmental Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies) whose primary focus is to keep track of intern opportunities, place students, and evaluate the experience.

- Many campuses are expanding their offerings of service-learning courses, in which students, faculty and community partners join together in programs that integrate teaching, research and service.

- Examples of service learning classes include a gerontology class that includes a fieldwork component where students work with older adults; a Russian class where students interview and work with immigrants in the LA Russian community; an interdisciplinary class on homelessness, where students work with homeless individuals.

In sum, while the University strongly endorses the report's premise that community service is important and should be encouraged, and is committed to exploring new ways to better promote and encourage civic participation, we are not in favor of making community service a mandatory graduation requirement.